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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000991

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KUWAITI AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ SWORN IN BY AMIR

REF: KUWAIT 953

Classified By: Political Counselor Peter O'Donohue for reasons
1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) On September 16, Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah swore in Lieutenant General (retired) Ali Al-Mou'min as the first Kuwaiti Ambassador to Baghdad since the Iraqi invasion in 1990. The swearing-in was lightly heralded by the press -- mentioned in only one daily, but confirmed to Embassy by MFA Americas desk First Secretary Hamad Misha'an. Misha'an speculated that Al-Mou'min would take up residence in Baghdad "sometime prior to the (Kuwaiti) PM's visit to Iraq," which is expected to take place after Ramadan (i.e. after September 30). Per reftel, our current understanding is that Al-Mou'min's presentation of credentials to the GOI would take place in late October.

¶2. (C) This is a significant, positive development in the bilateral Kuwait-Iraq relationship. Despite persistent USG appeals to the GOK to expedite Al-Mou'min's departure for Baghdad, his appointment has languished since 2006. Emboffs are scheduled to meet with Al-Mou'min on September 21.

Bio Note

¶3. (C) Al-Mou'min is the former Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff and received numerous awards and medals for his service from Kuwait, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, France, Ethiopia, the Czech Republic, the United States, and Argentina. He also received the Palestine Star Medal from the PLO. In his current position as the director of the Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC), Al-Mou'min oversees the disbursement of Kuwaiti aid to Iraq and facilitates the medical evacuation and treatment of wounded Iraqi civilians. He is one of the most prominent members of Kuwait's Shi'a minority community. He is married and has three sons and two daughters. Al-Mou'min speaks fluent English and has been an accessible Embassy interlocutor. He has a genial and low-key personal manner, as reflected in his consistent good humor about the extremely long delay in culmination of his ambassadorial appointment. As recently as last week he quipped to Ambassador with mock anxiety that he had "heard" that he would travel to Baghdad as ambassador soon, but still had no idea where he would live or work in the Iraqi capital.

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